



Rooted in God's grace, we joyfully witness and serve.

Core Values

*Intimacy With God
Inspiring Worship
Intentional Faith Development
Compassionate Outreach
Caring Community*

Church Council Meeting Minutes
January 14, 2025, 7:00 PM

2024 Elected Church Council Members	Executive Committee	Voting Representatives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bill Stoll 2. Brian Fisher 3. Chrissy O'Farrell 4. Rick Gardner 5. Tom Neuhaus 6. Tracy Blois 7. Becky Gilbertson 8. Fred Antrim 9. Jeanne Kuchera-Sikoff 10. Robert Mejia 11. Jim Prosser 12. Vicky Edell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bill Stoll (President) ● Tracy Blois (Vice President) ● Rick Gardner (Treasurer) ● Chrissy O'Farrell (Secretary) ● Brian Fisher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Henry Moraga (CDC Liaison)

Call to Order

The meeting was on Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm by President Bill Stoll.

Council Members Present

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bill Stoll 2. Brian Fisher 3. Chrissy O'Farrell 4. Rick Gardner | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Tom Neuhaus 6. Becky Gilbertson 7. Fred Antrim 8. Jim Prosser 9. Vicky Edell |
|---|---|

Voting Representatives Present

1. Henry Moraga

Staff Members Present

1. Pastor Julie Morris
2. Joe Zimmerly

Devotion: Led by Bill Stoll

Determination of Quorum

(C12.06) majority of members of the council-majority is defined as one over one-half (7).



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- Number of council members present: 9
- Number of voting representatives present: 1
- Number of council members and voting representatives present: 10 of 13

Caring Conversation: New Year plans or resolutions?

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Jim Prosser: *"to approve the amended minutes from the December 17th, 2024 meeting."*

- Second by Brian Fisher
- The minutes are approved via a hand vote, none opposed

Acceptance of Consent Agenda

Discussion

- Pastor Julie is working to put on "Pathways 2026" to discern the way forward for Mount Cross - we are looking for pathfinders to join the task. Contact Pastor Julie if you're interested.

Motion by Jim Prosser: *"to accept the consent agenda for December 17th, 2024."*

- Second by Becky Gilbertson
- The consent agenda is accepted via a hand vote, none opposed

Information: Property Committee (Jim Prosser)

Discussion

- Sunday's work day was the most successful one - 27 people! Thank you everyone for your help, we accomplished a lot.

Motion from Property Committee: *"to approve the property committee to spend \$702.00 with the arborist who previously cut the prayer garden trees to trim the remaining 15 trees in the parking lot."*

- No second needed
- Approved via a hand vote, none opposed



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Information: Budget (Rick Gardener)

Discussion / Notes

- Rick reviewed the proposed budget in detail and responded to questions by council members and the following changes to the proposed budget were made without objection:
 - \$3,900 in funding was added to line item 63670 "Meal Preparer" from dedicated account 35890 to fully fund the Care Teams Tuesday Meal Program for the year;
 - Budget line item 63675 funding was switched from operational funding to dedicated account 35363;
 - The note for line item 64587, Wednesday Evening Meals, was clarified to show the funding amount is exclusive of participant fees;
 - Funding for budget line item 67800, Peace & Justice, was switched from operational funding to dedicated account #35791."
- Budget and relevant discussions to be shared during the annual meeting on January 26th, 2025 in the church sanctuary.

Motion

Motion from Jim Prosser: *"to approve the budget, as amended, for presentation to the congregation."*

- Second from Tom Neuhaus
- Approved via a hand vote, none opposed

Reports

- Pastor's Report: Pastor Julie Morris – report below
- Children, Youth and Family Report: Joe Zimmerly – report below
- Treasurer's Report: Rick Gardner – report below

Upcoming Dates



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- Annual Meeting: January 26th, potluck at 10:45am, meeting at 11:45am
- Next council meeting: February 8th at 9:00am - 10:00am in person in the Sanctuary
- Church Retreat: February 8th from 10:00am - 2:00pm in person in the Sanctuary
- Serve Opportunity: UMC “ Rise Against Hunger” February 8th from 3:00pm - 4:00pm at United Methodist Church
- Additional Council Meeting: February 18th at 7:00pm - location TBD

Motion to Adjourn

Motion made by Brian Fisher: “to adjourn meeting”

- Second by Fred Antrim
- The motion passed unanimously by hand count, none opposed

Meeting Adjourned at 8:53 pm

DEVOTIONS			
FEBRUARY TBD	MARCH TBD	APRIL TBD	MAY TBD
JUNE TBD	JULY TBD	AUGUST TBD	SEPTEMBER TBD
OCTOBER TBD	NOVEMBER TBD	DECEMBER TBD	JANUARY 2026 TBD

Pastor's Report - Pastor Julie Morris December 17, 2024 – January 14, 2025

Worship: Thank you to our Music Ministry, Altar Guild, decorators, and worship assistants who helped Mount Cross offer a beautiful Christmas Eve service! 235 attended the service in person and we estimate at least 36 watched online. It was wonderful to have a full church and to see folks we haven't seen in a while, as well as visitors and friends. Thank you to Carol Browning for putting together a lovely Lessons



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and Carols service for Sunday, December 29, and thank you to Pastor Ralph Midtlyng for preaching on January 5.

Pastoral Care: Since our last Council meeting, it was a particularly busy time with pastoral visits -17 in total. That is partly because I was away on sabbatical during the fall but also because needs tend to be higher around major holidays. The Three Congregations Blue Christmas service helped support people experiencing grief and loss. It was well-received by the 55 people in attendance. Thank you to our Care Team for providing help during and after the service.

Adult Education: I facilitated Men's Bible Study on December 19 and January 2. In January we will return to the schedule where I facilitate one study each month and a lay leader facilitates the other. Women's Bible Study resumed January 7. I will continue to facilitate that weekly, as I am available. ROOTED will resume January 15. Pastor Ralph will teach "The Jesus Driven Life" on Sundays (January 19 and February 2, 9, 16, and 23) from 11 a.m.-12 p.m. in the PLC.

Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting is Sunday, January 26 at 11:45 a.m. Our Treasurer, Rick Gardner, will offer a budget information meeting on Sunday, January 19 at noon in the sanctuary. The notices were sent out Monday, January 13. Reports will be available this Sunday. We will have a pot-luck after worship, before the meeting begins. Thank you to Council members for helping with that. Our Treasurer, Rick Gardner, will offer a budget information meeting on Sunday, January 19 at noon in the sanctuary. At the Annual Meeting, I plan to announce a new initiative that was inspired by the leadership work I did on my sabbatical. "Pathways 2026" will be a process to help the congregation center ourselves in God's mission for Mount Cross and discern faithful responses to our budget challenges.

Leadership Retreat: Please plan to attend the all-church Leadership Retreat Saturday, Feb. 8. The Council will meet at 9 a.m. to elect officers. The retreat will be from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. (lunch and childcare included), and we will conclude the day with a Rise Against Hunger service project from 3-4:30 p.m. at Camarillo United Methodist Church.

THANK YOU 2024 Church Council for a great year! Your generous and prayerful leadership made a positive difference in our congregation, and I am personally grateful to each of you for your guidance, encouragement, and support. God bless the officers and council members who are rotating off this year, and God bless those who are staying on for another year!

Late Add to Pastor's Report: Rachel Zook-Brimer sent me this in response to Sunday's work day:



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“While I’ve been managing this concern [reducing wildfire risk] on my own, the workday we just had as a church really demonstrated the power of what we can accomplish as a community. Clearing the brush under those Junipers felt like putting my concerns into action to reduce fire risk. It got me wondering if we might come together again—not necessarily with physical labor, but perhaps through advocacy or awareness—to encourage ongoing maintenance and fire prevention efforts.

Here are a few ways this could become a community effort:

- Raising Awareness: Sharing information with neighbors about fire risk and their responsibility to maintain brush.
- Advocacy: Supporting enforcement of brush management requirements through communication with the city.
- Community Education: Hosting a conversation or inviting the fire department to share fire safety tips with the broader neighborhood.”

Please let me know if you would like to work with Rachel on these efforts.

Joe Zimmerly - Children, Youth and Family January 2025 - Council Report

Program Pause

Our weekly programming paused from Dec. 19 - Jan. 13, 2025. High School Youth Group resumed on Monday, January 13th and Wednesday Night Programs will resume on January 15th, 2025.

Middle & High School Youth

Thank you to the many who donated towards the Christmas Cookie Jar fundraiser we had during December. We raised over \$800.00 splitting the proceeds with those affected by the Mountain Fire. We are so thankful to those who donated and to our kids who prepared and sold jars each week.

Four of our high school youth gathered on Monday, January 13 from 5:30PM-7:00PM assembling our Thrivent Cause Kits. The project was assembling water filters (6) to then be mailed out into the world to those who suffer access to clean drinking water. We learned that one filter would last a family 10 years! During this time we also dove into the book of Luke discussing baptism, sharing our own stories and reading about Jesus’. We ended the night assembling a planning team (Marli Saner & Kaitlyn Edwards) who



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will work together to plan & communicate youth events with their peers (and with my help).

We will be joining the Camarillo United Methodist Church for the Rise Against Hunger service project they are hosting on February 8th, 2025. This takes place from 3:00PM-4:30PM and the goal is to have over 100 people pack 10,000 meal kits in 90 minutes. Are you up for the challenge? We hope to see you there.

Confirmation will pause for three weeks due to the holidays. We will resume on January 15, 2025. Pastor Julie and I will be teaching each week and beginning to prepare our 8th graders for their Confirmation Day, which will be June 1, 2025.

Children's Ministry

The Family Faith Formation Committee met on Monday, January 13 for 90 minutes discussing Sunday School, the Playground, and Family Serving Sunday. Our discussion led us to seeing these two changes in our Children's Ministry environments and program offerings:

1. Playground - Adapting the playground environment and materials to the older kids who use the space giving them developmentally appropriate & liturgical materials to use in worship.
2. Sunday School - Amanda Honda will be leading a Sunday School Teacher Training in February to discuss the possibility of separating into two smaller groups, making it easier to teach. Trying to teach to one large group of varying ages has been difficult for teachers to manage.

Treasurer's Report Through December 2024

Budget Performance (through December 2024):

Gross income for December was \$51,524 (137% of budget versus 101% last month).

Gross income for 2024 was \$469,754 (104% of budget versus 101% last month).

Pledged giving for December was \$39,977 (151% of budget versus 76% last month).

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Expenses for December were \$40,183 (92% of budget versus 91% last month).

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Net income for December was \$51,524 - \$40,183 = \$11,341 (compared to budget amount of - \$5,854).

Net income for 2024 was \$469,754 - \$503,369 = - \$33,615 (compared to the budget amount of - \$70,256).

Calculated reserves were \$117,883 compared to about \$109,390 in November.

Analysis:

1. We had a strong financial performance in December due to generous holiday giving. Total and pledged income were well above budget for the month, and expenses were lower than budget. The result was a net income of over \$11,000 as compared to the budgeted amount of negative \$6,000.
2. For the year, pledged income was right on budget. Total giving was higher than budget, primarily due to high non-pledged giving. Expenses for the year were below budget. We experienced a loss of almost \$34,000 for the year compared to a projected loss of \$70,000.
3. Our operating reserves are currently sitting at \$118,000. Our endowment fund has performed well with a balance of \$609,000 as of the end of November.

[Balance Sheet](#)

[Financial Performance](#)

Consent Agenda - January 2025

Please notify the Office Manager of any changes in meeting days, times, or locations

President's Note -

As my term comes to a close, I would like to thank all of the Council for their hard work, help, and guidance the last two years. I would especially like to thank the Executive Committee (Tracy, Tom, Rick, Chrissy, Brian, along with Pastor Julie and Joe) for the many extra hours you have put in. I greatly appreciate your selflessness.

Pastor's Report

December 17, 2024 – January 14, 2025

Worship: Thank you to our Music Ministry, Altar Guild, decorators, and worship assistants who helped Mount Cross offer a beautiful Christmas Eve service! 235 attended the service in person and we estimate at least 36 watched online. It was wonderful to have a full church and to see folks we haven't seen in a while, as well as visitors and friends. Thank you to Carol Browning for putting together a lovely Lessons and Carols service for Sunday, December 29, and thank you to Pastor Ralph Midtlyng for preaching on January 5.

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Please let me know if you would like to work with Rachel on these efforts.

Communications Coordinator - Carina (carina@mountcross.com)

Music Director - Carol (office@mountcross.com)

After a busy December with our Advent/Christmas program, Blue Christmas, and Christmas Eve services, it was nice to have a couple of weeks off before rehearsals resumed on January 8. Our handbell choir played this past Sunday, January 12, which was a great addition to our worship. One ringer, Betty Ertel, had to step down from the choir at the end of 2024 because of business and personal commitments. We're in the process of finding a replacement for her. I'm also working with Kristi VanKeersbilck, finalizing plans for a combined Mount Cross-CUMC Bell Choir Day on Saturday, February 1, learning from a handbell clinician, rehearsing and playing music together, enjoying fellowship, and fostering the relationships between our two churches.

Next Sunday, January 19, our choir will offer a prelude and lead the psalm. We're grateful that Justin Thai, our former worship tech, will be with us to play flute on the prelude and a few other songs during worship. (Justin went to Bratislava in September to begin a 3-year study program but has had to return home to sort out some issues with his visa.)

We'll finish out the month with members of our praise band on Sunday, January 26 - Jessie Hanevich and Jerry Warren will add guitar and keyboard, respectively, and Carina McVeigh and Brian Stouch will be our songleaders that morning. We are blessed to have so many talented music ministers who provide leadership of our sung prayer in a variety of styles and expressions.

We continue to be blessed by Jessica Helms' gifts, not only in the preludes and postludes she offers but in her worship accompaniments and her assistance with the choir. I'm also grateful for the talents of our Mount Cross "Piano Man," Elliott Ripley, who filled in with a fun postlude on Epiphany when Jessica was ill and who helps out with piano accompaniments from time to time so that Jessica can move downstairs for postludes on the grand piano. 2024 was a very full year for our Music Ministry, and I have no doubt that 2025 will bring many more inspiring and meaningful experiences - thank you to all who share their talents in our ministry!

CYFM Director - Joe

January 2025 - Council Report

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2. Sunday School - Amanda Honda will be leading a Sunday School Teacher Training in February to discuss the possibility of separating into two smaller groups, making it easier to teach. Trying to teach to one large group of varying ages has been difficult for teachers to manage.

Deacon Cecelia Report-Senior Adult Ministry

Treasurer's Report - Rick

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[Financial Performance](#)

Committee Reports

Audit Committee

Worship & Music - Met December 4

Adult Ed –

Altar Guild -

Budget & Finance

Care Team - [Susan Prosser](#)

Endowment - Brian

FFF - Tracy

Welcome/Fellowship Committee

Personnel - Tom

The Annual Report of the Personnel Committee was submitted in preparation for the Annual Congregational Meeting later this month. The Report reviewed the actions taken by the Committee and Council in 2024 regarding personnel matters, such as the revision of some job descriptions and the hiring of a new organist/accompanist).

There are 2 items currently requiring Council action/approval for 2025. The first is the renewal of the "Purchase of Services" Agreement between Mount Cross and Synod for our purchase of 10 hours per week of the services of Deacon Cecilia. The proposal from Synod is for a 12 month renewal on the same basic terms (including monthly cost) as the agreement for the last 7 months of 2024.

The second item is the conversion of Bill Dawson from independent contractor status to employee status. The need is to recognize that his weekly role is that of an employee, not a contractor. Bill is agreeable, at a wage of \$50 per hour and the expectation of an average of 4 hours per week (in 2024 Bill was paid \$200/week).

If the Council agrees these two actions can be passed by approval of the Consent Agenda or by Motion at the meeting if discussion is desired.

Property – Jim Prosser

The Mount Cross Lutheran Church Property Committee met on January 9, 2025, at 7:01 p.m. in the Parish Life Center. It was announced that Joan Brundage had submitted her resignation from the committee. Also, Bill Stoll and Gordon Henry formally joined the property committee.

Action Item. The committee seeks approval to spend \$702 from the Property Perpetual Fund to have the remaining 13 trees in the parking lot trimmed. The trees in the prayer garden and the island were trimmed in December as part of other projects.

Most of the meeting was devoted to discussing the upcoming Workday. Amy agreed to acquire the food for lunch. Jim would check with Carol Broderick about overseeing work activities in the sacristy. We also discussed the different projects in the parking lot to be performed: clean up around the

juniper hedge along Camino Esplendido; spreading of the wood chips in the planter areas; trimming the juniper tree in the southwest corner of the property; and, weeding and spreading the remaining gravel along the south wall.

Report on the January 12 Workday. We had one of the most successful workdays held at the church in a number of years!!! We had 27 adults, including 4 council members. We were able to complete all of the tasks on the outdoor list; and Carol led a group of volunteers in accomplishing significant cleaning and organizing the sacristy. Others cleaned the balcony and the sanctuary. The lunch that Amy got at Costco hit the spot and Joe provided the childcare that freed up some of our younger members to be part of the workforce. Thank you to everyone who participated.

Safety -

Peace & Justice/RIC - [Becky](#)

Service & Missions -

Stewardship – [Bill](#)

The issues with members giving their pledges on line has been dealt with by the committee. Although we still have fewer pledges than last year, the dollar amount is slightly higher than the previous year. We are concerned that this may be offset by lower dollar amount of non-pledged donations in 2025 and feel Council should watch for this in the coming year.

Tech -

CDC